

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented project management system for displaying an estimated duration character in a field, where the estimated duration character is text, comprising:

- a user interface for receiving a project task duration value string having a duration value portion and an estimated flag, wherein the duration value string is text;
- a parser for separating the duration value string into the duration value portion and the estimated flag, wherein the duration value portion is converted into a numerical value of time, and wherein the estimated flag indicates whether the estimated duration character should be displayed;
- a storage for storing the separated duration value string; and
- a display for showing the duration value string and for showing the estimated duration character in the field based on the estimated flag, wherein if the estimated duration character is displayed, the estimated duration character indicates that the numerical value of time is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the duration value portion comprises:

- a duration value, which is the value internally used by the system; and
- a duration display type, which indicates how the duration should be displayed.

3. (Original) The system of claim 1 or 2, wherein the storage comprises:

- a duration value memory for storing the duration value;
- a duration display type memory for storing the duration display type; and
- an estimated flag memory for storing the estimated flags.

4. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method for displaying an estimated duration character in a project management system, where the estimated duration character is text that indicates that a time period duration is estimated, comprising the steps of:

- determining if sheet mode or dialog mode should be used;

- wherein if the sheet mode is used, the user enters a project task duration value, which is a numerical value of time internally used, in a first duration field, and enters an estimated duration character in the first duration field; and

- wherein if the dialog mode is used, the user accesses a dialog box to enter the project task duration value in a second duration field, and either enters the estimated duration character in the second duration field, where the second duration field is a field holding duration information, or checks an estimated field, where the estimated field is a field holding information on whether the duration is estimated; and

- running the sheet mode or the dialog mode to display the estimated duration character in a display field, wherein if the estimated duration character is displayed, the estimated duration character indicates that the project task duration value is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the steps of determining if the sheet mode should be used comprises the steps of:

- moving a cursor to the first duration field where the user wants to enter the project task duration value; and

- clicking the cursor once on the first duration field where the user wants to enter the project task duration value.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of determining if the dialog mode should be used comprises the steps of:

moving a cursor to the second duration field where the user wants to enter the project task duration value; and
clicking the cursor twice on the second duration field where the user wants to enter the project task duration value or using a tool bar command.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of running the sheet mode further comprises the steps of:

inputting a duration value string, where the duration value string is text that indicates the project task duration value and whether the project task duration value is estimated;

separating the duration value string into a duration value, where the duration value is a numerical value internally used by the system, a duration display type, where the duration display type indicates how the duration should be displayed; and an estimated flag, where the estimated flag indicates that the estimated duration character should be displayed;

storing the project task duration value in a duration value memory;

storing the duration display type in a duration display type memory;

determining if the estimated flag is set to "yes" or "no";

storing the estimated flag in an estimated flag memory if the estimated flag is set to "yes";

displaying the project task duration value in the correct duration display type, and the estimated duration character if the estimated flag is stored in the estimated flag memory.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of running the dialog mode further comprises the steps of:

creating copies of the duration fields and the estimated field;

inputting the duration value string, where the duration value string is text that indicates the project task duration value and whether the duration is estimated;

separating the duration value string into a project task duration value, where the project task duration value is a numerical value of time internally used by the system, a duration display type, where the duration display type indicates how the duration should be displayed; and an estimated flag, where the estimated flag indicate that the estimated duration character should be displayed;

storing the project task duration value in a duration value memory;

storing the duration display type in a duration display type memory;

determining if the estimated flag is set to "yes" or "no";

storing the estimated flag in an estimated flag memory if the estimated flag is set to "yes";

closing the dialog box;

displaying the project task duration value in the correct duration display type, and the estimated duration character if the estimated flag is stored in the estimated flag memory.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the step of closing the dialog box comprises the steps of:

determining whether the user wants to "OK" or "cancel" the user choice data;

duplicating the duration value, the duration display type, and estimated flag if the user wants to "OK" the user choice data; and

closing the dialog box without duplicating the duration value, duration display type, and estimated flag if the user chooses "cancel".

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7 or 8, wherein the step of separating the duration value string comprises the steps of:

- identifying the duration value and the duration display type in the duration value string;

- checking the estimated flag memory to see if any unidentified characters in the duration value string is a default estimated duration character, where the default estimated duration character is the default text that is used to indicate that the time period duration is estimated;

- setting the estimated flag to "yes" if any unidentified characters in the duration value string is the default estimated duration character;

- checking the estimated flag memory to see if any unidentified characters in the duration value string is an alternate estimated duration character, where the alternate estimated duration character is alternate text that is used to indicate that the time period duration is estimated;

- setting the estimated flag to "yes" if any of the unidentified characters in the duration value string is the alternate estimated duration character;

- removing all default estimated duration characters and all alternate estimation duration characters; and

- setting the estimated flag to "no" if none of the unidentified characters in the duration value string is the default estimated duration character or the alternate estimated duration character.

11. (Original) The method of claim 7 or 8, wherein said step of displaying the duration value comprises the steps of:

- obtaining the duration value;

- obtaining the duration display type;

- combining the duration value and the duration display type into a human readable string;

- checking the estimated flag to see if it is set to "yes" or "no":

checking a user option to display the estimated duration character to see if it is set to "yes" or "no";

displaying the duration value in the correct duration display type and the estimated duration character if the estimated flag and the user choice are set to "yes";
and

displaying the duration value in the correct duration display type if the estimated flag or the user choice is "no".

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said step of displaying the duration value in the correct duration display type, and the estimated duration character if the estimated flag and the user choice are set to "yes" comprises the steps of:

determining the position for the estimated duration character and adding the estimated duration character to the human readable string;

determining the default estimated duration character and adding the default estimated duration character to the human readable string; and

displaying the duration value in the correct duration display type and the estimated duration character.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of: allowing the user to select an option to not display the estimated duration character.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of: allowing the user to select an option to designate new tasks with estimated duration characters until the user chooses to enter a duration value.

15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of: allowing the user to filter a task list to display only tasks that have estimated duration characters.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of: designating a summary level task having subtasks with an estimated duration character if any of the subtasks has an estimated duration character.
17. (Previously Presented) A method in a project planning system for specifying durations, the method comprising:
receiving from a user a duration value string including a duration of a project task and a first indication that the duration is estimated, wherein the duration of the project task is a numerical value of time;
storing an indication of the duration of the project task is estimated; and
when displaying the duration of the project task, displaying a second indication that the duration is estimated and the duration of the project task needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known.
18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the received first indication and the displayed second indication are in different formats.
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the received first indication that the duration is estimated is a symbol of uncertainty specified as part of a string that includes the duration.
20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the received first indication that the duration is estimated is selection of an estimated field.
21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein project tasks are hierarchically organized and wherein when a parent project task has at least one child project task whose duration is estimated, indicating that the duration of the parent project task is estimated.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17 including upon receiving an indication to display only project tasks whose durations are estimated, displaying an indication of such project tasks.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17 including when an indication of whether or not a duration is estimated is not received, setting the duration to estimated.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17 including upon receiving an indication to change the duration of the project task from estimated to definite, storing an indication that the duration of the project task is definite.

25. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a computer system to specify durations of tasks in a project management system, by a method comprising:

receiving from a user a duration value string including a duration of a project task along with an indication as to whether the duration of the project task is estimated or definite, wherein the duration of the project task is a numerical value of time;

storing the received duration of the project task and the indication as to whether the duration of the project task is estimated or definite in association with the task; and

when displaying the duration of the project task, displaying an estimated duration character if the indication indicates that the duration of the project task is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite duration value is known.

26. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein the estimated duration character is the same as the indication.

27. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein the indication as to whether the duration is estimated or definite is a symbol of uncertainty specified as part of a string that includes the duration.

28. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein the indication as to whether the duration is estimated or definite is selection of an estimated field.

29. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein tasks are hierarchically organized and wherein when a parent task has at least one child task whose duration is estimated, indicating that the duration of the parent task is estimated.

30. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 including upon receiving an indication to display only tasks whose durations are estimated, displaying an indication of each such task.

31. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein the duration is set to estimated by default.

32. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 25 including upon receiving an indication to change the duration of the task from estimated to definite, storing that the duration of the task is definite.

33-37. (Canceled)

38. (New) A computer-implemented method for specifying and displaying whether a project task duration of a project plan is estimated or definite in a project management system, the method comprising:

determining whether the specifying of a project task duration is in a first mode or a second mode;

when in the first mode,

receiving from a user a first project task duration string via a first project task duration field, the first project task duration string including a project task duration value, a project task duration display type, and a project task estimated character, the project task duration value being a numerical value of time, the project task duration display type indicating units of the numerical value of time, and the project task estimated character indicating that the project task duration is estimated and needs to be adjusted when a definite project task duration is known;

parsing the first project task duration string to identify the project task duration value, the project task duration display type, and the project task estimated character;

storing an indication of the project task duration value and the project task duration display type; and

setting an estimated flag to indicate that the project task duration is estimated;

when in the second mode,

receiving from the user a second project task duration string via a second task duration field and an indication of whether the project task duration is estimated via a estimated duration field, the second project task duration string including a project duration value and a project task duration display type;

parsing the second project task duration string to identify the project task duration value and the project task duration display type;
storing an indication of the project task duration value and the project task duration display type; and
setting an estimated flag to indicate whether the estimated duration field indicates whether the project task duration is estimated;
displaying the project task duration by displaying an indication of whether the duration is estimated based on the estimated flag and displaying a project task duration string that includes the project task duration value, the project task duration display type, and when the project task duration is estimated based on the estimated flag, a project task estimated character; and
updating the project task duration that is estimated when a definite project task duration is known.

39. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein tasks are hierarchically organized and wherein when a parent task has at least one child task whose duration is estimated, displaying an indication that the duration of the parent task is estimated.

40. (New) The method of claim 38 including upon receiving an indication to display only tasks whose durations are estimated, displaying an indication of each such task.

41. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the project task estimated character is a symbol of uncertainty.